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AUTHOR Espeland, Mecedes
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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the appropriateness of the "Star Trek" book series for use as recreational reading material for elementary school children. The 12 books were adapted from the television series by James Blish. Appropriateness was determined by evaluating the quality and the readability levels of the books. Quality was ascertained by examining setting, characterization, plot, theme, style, and format. The readability levels were established by the application of the Fry Readability Scale to three random passages of 100 words from each book. The quality of the books was found to be superior in terms of setting, characterization, plot, and theme, and adequate in terms of style and format. The readability grade levels ranged from fifth to eighth grade with an average placement of sixth grade. The findings suggest that the "Star Trek" books would be suitable as recreational reading for elementary school children. (Titles of the stories contained in the 12 books are appended.) (Author/FL)

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STAR TREK AS RECREATIONAL READING FOR CHILDREN

by

Mecedes Espeland

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Chapter 1

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

1. What are the readability levels of the Star Trek stories?
2. Are the Star Trek stories suitable recreational reading material for the elementary school child?

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Students need recreational reading material which they find enjoyable. Such material can reinforce reading skills taught in the classroom. However, these materials should meet certain qualifications in terms of selection procedures.

The Star Trek series should be considered for such use because of its high motivational aspect. Children today are growing up in the space age and many have expressed great interest in space science fiction. Star Trek is a good outlet for this interest because it is based upon space travel and exploration. It is reinforced via the television programs. Although the television series Star Trek went off the air over ten years ago, reruns are still being televised in most areas of the United States.

DEFINITIONS

Readability Level - The grade level equivalent determined by vocabulary, sentence length and sentence frequency.

Recreational Reading - The reading in which a person is engaged for the single purpose of enjoyment.

Science Fiction - Fictional stories which are based upon existing scientific fact or scientific theory.

Star Trek - A television series created by Gene Roddenberry. Individual episodes were authored by Mr. Roddenberry and others and were later adapted into short stories by James Blish.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Students are more geared towards reading when they enjoy that which they read.
2. Increasing recreational reading improves reading skills taught in the classroom.

LIMITATIONS

1. Only the Star Trek stories which have been televised in the original series will be evaluated. These seventy-nine stories are published in twelve separate books.
2. As per directives given in the Fry readability formula, random passages from each story will be selected to determine readability.

METHODS USED IN COLLECTING DATA

The methods used in collecting data will be as follows:

1. Standards for determining appropriateness of children's literature will be examined. This will be done by researching pertinent literature.
2. Readability formulas will be examined to determine the one(s) most appropriate for use with the Star Trek stories.
3. The stories will be examined to see if they meet the accepted standards for selecting literature for children.
4. The stories will be evaluated to discover the grade level readabilities of each.

Chapter 2

READABILITY

Determining the difficulty of reading material usually involves two types of analysis. They are measurement analysis and predictive analysis.

> Predictive techniques are restricted to the material; measurement analysis requires interaction of readers with material. Either type of analysis can be accomplished with both formal and informal procedures, and the objective is almost always the same - to determine whether the designated readers can learn from the material.[1]

Measurement Analysis

Several devices have been developed which fall into the classification of measurement analysis. The most widely recognized is known as the cloze procedure. The cloze procedure was introduced in 1953 by Wilson Taylor. Taylor defines the cloze procedure as

> . . . . [a] method of interpreting a message from a 'transmitter', mutilating its language patterns by deleting parts, and so administering it to 'receiver'

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[1]Thomas H. Estes and Joseph L. Vaughan, Jr., Reading and Learning in the Content Classroom (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978), p. 22.

that their attempts to make the pattern whole again yield a considerable number of cloze units.[2]

Estes and Vaughan list the following steps to be taken to construct a cloze passage.

1. Select a reading passage that your students have not yet read. It should be approximately 300 words in length.

2. Type the first sentence intact. Starting with the fifth word in the second sentence, delete every fifth word until you have fifty deletions. Replace each deletion with an underlined blank fifteen spaces long.

3. Finish the sentence in which the fiftieth deletion occurs. Type one more sentence intact.[3]

Following this a child indicates the words which he feels belong in the blanks. Upon scoring only the actual words deleted are considered correct. The percentage of correct responses is determined and the average percentage of a group of children is found.[4]

This method does not indicate a grade level but rather lets the tester know if the material is suitable for the group of children tested.

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[2]Wilson L. Taylor, Application of Cloze and Entrophy Measures to the Study of Contextual Constraint in Samples of Continuous Prose, unpublished Ph. C. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1954, as cited in W. H. Miller, Elementary Reading Today (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), p. 224.

[3]Estes and Vaughan, ob. cit., p. 29.

[4]Ibid., p. 30.

Another measurement analysis technique is known as the maze technique. According to Estes and Vaughan

> The maze technique consists of:
>
> 1. A series of sentences extracted from a passage that the student has not previously read.
>
> 2. The text is altered by substituting three alternative words for every fifth or tenth word in the passage. . . . The three choices that are substituted are:
>
>   a. the correct word
>   b. an incorrect word from the same word class, such as noun, verb, etc.
>   c. an incorrect word from a different word class.
>
> 3. The student reads the passage silently and selects the alternative he or she believes to be correct.
>
> 4. The percentage of correct choices is commensurate with comprehension of the material in the passage. Thus, if a reader correctly identifies fifteen of twenty choices, he or she can be said to be reading with 75 percent comprehension. Apparently, twenty items are sufficient for valid results.[5]

Here again a grade level is not indicated; rather the appropriateness of the material to the students tested is found.

One final measurement analysis is the informal measurement procedure. This method is more subjective than the others but has proven its validity. One method for performing this procedure is as follows:

> 1. Select a passage from the material that the students have not previously read. Choose a length that is complete in itself and will approximate the length that they might be expected to read as an assignment.

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[5] Ibid., p. 32.

2. Ask the students to read it.

3. Administer a ten-question test based on:

   a. main idea
   b. factual information
   c. inferences
   d. vocabulary

4. Go over the test with them. Discuss the answers and determine through intuition and their opinions how well they will be able to learn from this material.[6]

Predictive Analysis

As stated, predictive analysis deals with determining the readability of reading materials. According to Dechant,

> Readability is not an easily defined concept. It involves an interaction between reader and book. Because communication between writer and reader seldom is perfect, readability rarely can be absolute. It usually is a matter of degree. The teacher thus must make some practical decisions as to the degree of understanding that is necessary before a book may be considered readable by a child at a certain grade level.[7]

Different methods of determining readability have been developed. The first method, which turned out to be rather inaccurate, was to have teachers and librarians rate books according to difficulty.[8] Another approach involved a list of seven hundred books which were read by thirty-seven thousand children.

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[6]Ibid., p. 33.

[7]Emerald V. Dechant, Improving the Teaching of Reading (2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 278.

[8]Ibid.

> The grade placement of each book was found by determining the average reading ability of the children who read and enjoyed the book.[9]

Student interest and many other important factors were not considered however, and the results were inaccurate.

One other method of determining readability levels involves the use of readability formulas.

> Since 1923, more than thirty such formulas have been developed. Generally, the authors of these have attempted to identify the factors that make the material difficult to read. The factors most agreed upon are vocabulary. . . some aspect of sentence difficulty. . . and the number of prepositional phrases.[10]

Although there are over thirty such formulas, only a few are in wide usage. The Dale-Chall and Spache formulas have proven to be most accurate. Each deals primarily with sentence length and a controlled vocabulary list. They are, however, very complex and time consuming to utilize. According to Estes and Vaughan,

> . . . Dale-Chall (1948) and Spache (1960) have been widely used in research and textbook preparation, however, and their complexity lies primarily in the process of determining vocabulary difficulty. Both formulas require that each word in a passage be compared to a graded list of familiar words. Thus an adequate administration of these formulas may require as much as an hour per book or passage.[11]

Another widely used formula is McLaughin's SMOG Readability Formula. Along with the Fry Readability Formula

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[9] Ibid., pp. 278-279.

[10] Ibid., p. 279.

[11] Estes and Vaughan, op. cit., p. 23.

it is one of the least complicated yet accurate. The basics of the SMOG Formula are:

1. Count ten consecutive sentences near the beginning, ten in the middle, and ten near the end of the selection.

2. In the thirty sentences (total), count every word of three or more syllables when they are read aloud. Recount polysyllabic words (of three or more syllables) if they are repeated.

3. Estimate the square root of the total number of polysyllabic words by taking the square root of the nearest perfect square.

4. If the total number of polysyllabic words falls exactly between two perfect squares, take the lowest of the two.

5. Add three (3) to the estimated square root to determine the reading level.[12]

The other uncomplicated yet accurate formula is the Fry Readability Formula. The Fry Readability Formula initially made use of a Fry Readability Graph. The directions for its use are as follows:

> Randomly select three 100-word passages from a book or an article. Plot average number of syllables and average number of words per sentence on the graph to determine the grade level of the material. Choose more passages per book if great variability is observed and conclude that the book has uneven readability.[13]

In 1976 Fry copyrighted a Fry Readability Scale which is a cardboard device approximately 21cm. X 8cm. and containing a sliding indicator used to match up syllable count to sentence length which then indicates the approximate

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[12]Ibid., p. 25.

[13]Dechant, op. cit., p. 280.

grade level. It is this Fry Readability Scale which will be used to determine the readability level of the Star Trek books.

IMPACT OF RECREATIONAL READING TO BASIC READING SKILLS

Although the purpose of recreational reading is enjoyment, it may be stated that the more a child reads, the better his reading becomes. Botel stated that:

> One effect of increasing the amount of reading students do on their own is not surprising - they get to be better readers. This shows up in improved classroom response to directed instruction and on the results of standardized and informal tests.[14]

This concept has also been expressed by Chambers and Lowry.

> Because more reading is done when children's books are a part of the reading program, skills are given an opportunity to be used more often. They thus are more likely to become a part of the child's collection of permanent reading tools.[15]

What are these skills which are reinforced through recreational reading? According to Ruddell:

> Several important areas of a complete reading and language program receive direct support from the literature experiences;

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[14]Morton Botel, Ed. D., How to Teach Reading (Chicago: Follett Pub. Co., 1968), pp. 27-28.

[15]Dewey Woods Chambers and Heath Ward Lowry, The Language Arts a Pragmatic Approach (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. Pub., 1975), p. 342.

Conceptual development

Vocabulary and label expansion

Awareness of a variety of syntactical patterns and flexibility of style

Awareness of the symbolic function of language

Flexibility of style and usage

Decoding and encoding skills[16]

Thus not only does a child's comprehension improve when the amount of recreational reading is increased, but phonetical skills also become strengthened. Each time the child picks up a book or magazine he is, in effect, practicing the reading skills taught in the classroom.

CENSORSHIP

It is very difficult to determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable reading material for children. As soon as materials are questioned, the problem of censorship arises. Censorship in general and specifically when related to children's literature is a highly controversial subject. Because of this, opposing viewpoints are ever present. As Sadker and Sadker point out, what frequently begins on a local level may reach the federal agencies and even the Supreme Court. Sadker and Sadker stated that:

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[16]Robert B. Ruddell, Reading - Language Instructions: Innovative Practices (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 503-504.

> Although limited students' civil rights have been affirmed in a variety of cases, many times the [Supreme] Court has granted the right to censor children's books to parents, schoolboards, and school administrators. . . This position is not universally accepted by all Americans or, in fact, by all Supreme Court justices. Justice Douglas dissented from an opinion that let stand a decision in New York City granting a school board the right to censor Piri Thomas' Down These Mean Streets. . . The American Civil Liberties Union agrees with Justice Douglas, as do a variety of organizations, including the American Library Association. The ALA is committed to the idea that the responsibility for determining a child's reading habits is best left to the child and his parents and that such decisions are not to be determined by librarian, teacher, or governmental or community groups.[17]

Many times the controversy results in law suits brought about by local political or social groups or by parents against the institutions in which the controversial books are located, such as schools and libraries. However, because of the differing court decisions, materials censored in one area may not be censored in another area. "Court decisions are not always predictable, and they do vary, depending on individual cases, court membership and social trends."[18]

Within the controversy of censorship in children's books are found certain specifics. Those aspects most often opposed to are: sexuality, pornography, profanity, bigotry, racism, stereotyping, drug usage, political presentations, violence, language, and religion. "The sources and subjects

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[17]Myra Pollack Sadker and David Miller Sadker, Now Upon a Time A Contemporary View of Children's Literature (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 367.

[18]Ibid.

of censorship vary greatly, but probably the most commonly censored subject is sexuality."[19]

In addition:

> . . . books are likely to face objections from those who consider them too liberal or too conservative, too realistic or too phony, racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, pornographic, or without literary or educational merit. . . Such issues as violence, pornography, racism and sexism, for example have been criticized as having the potential for psychological damage to children.[20]

White noted that language, profanity, bigotry, racism, stereotyping of characters, drugs, nudity, and political aspects are most often causes for censorship.[21]

In a study, Censorship Involving Educational Institutions in the United States, 1966-75, L. B. Woods noted fifteen reasons given for censorship attempts: obsenity, political, sex and nudity, language, racism, religious, criticism, morality, drugs, unauthorized war, abortion, biased/inaccurate, violence, and poor quality.[22]

Although these are the most common reasons for censorship of materials for children, not all books which contain such subject matter are subjected to censorship, and those materials which are censored are often only

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[19]Ibid., p. 362.

[20]Ibid., pp. 366-7.

[21]Mary Low White, "Censorship - Threat over Children's Books," Elementary School Journal, LXXV (October, 1974), pp. 4-7.

[22]L. B. Woods, "For Sex: See Librarian," Library Journal, CIII (September 1, 1978), p. 1566.

censored in small areas or local communities. Generally, more and more of these subjects are accepted in children's books. Arbuthnot and Sutherland noted that:

> As adult literature has become more sophisticated and frank in its use of language, and permissive in its treatment of hitherto-taboo subjects, so books for young people have to a certain degree followed suit . . . there has been a growing number [of books] in which controversial themes are handled with dignity and honesty - books in which sexual and psychological problems are faced, in which siblings and parents may be hostile, in which teen-agers use the language that readers are well aware is used in real life.[23]

They also stated that:

> Although there have been many changes in realistic fiction for younger children and for children in the middle groups, the most striking changes have been in realistic fiction for older children. In the most recent books, subjects which were once taboo or eluded, such as premarital pregnancy or illegitimate children, are fairly common, and the image of the perfect parent appears in fewer and fewer stories. Problems that confront today's youth are treated with understanding; the generation gap, the drug scene, the dissatisfaction with a materialistic society. And the language used reflects the speech of today, both in the admission of words that were once considered shocking and in the use of black English.[24]

In summary the problems of censorship are wide and varied and are not to be readily solved. Sound arguments can be found to support both ends of the controversy. Sadker and Sadker stated it best.

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[23]May Hill Arbuthnot and Zena Sutherland, Children and Books (4th ed., Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman, 1972), p. 105.

[24]Ibid., p. 456.

> Censorship, therefore, is not a simple and clear-cut issue, and even the laws concerning the censorship of books for children are continually in flux as courts attempt to determine how much freedom is appropriate for children.[25]

SELECTION PROCEDURES

Although the line dividing censorship and book selection is a fine line, there still must be certain criteria to follow when assessing books for children. Selected factors must be examined to help evaluate a book exclusive of the factors previously mentioned in the discussion on censorship.

> Selection is made upon the basis of quality and appropriateness for children. Censorship, however, would curtail the purchase of books that represented conflicting religious, political, or social points of view.[26]

Those factors important to consider when judging reading materials of fiction for children are: plot, setting, theme, characterization, style, and format.[27]

The plot of a story deals with the story line or rather ". . . It tells what the characters do and what happens to them."[28]

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[25] Op. cit., p. 371.

[26] Charlotte S. Huck and Doris Young Kuhn, Children's Literature in the Elementary School (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 42.

[27] Ibid., p. 9.

[28] Ibid.

The setting includes the time the story takes place in terms of past, present, or future, the locale and the sum total of all environmental factors which are present in the story.[29]

Theme involves ". . . the author's purpose in writing the story."[30]

The characterization deals with the development of the personalities of the characters in the story. "The credibility of characters will depend upon the author's ability to show their true natures, their strengths, and their weaknesses."[31]

"The format of a book includes size, shape, design of pages, illustrations, topography, quality of paper, and binding."[32]

Each of these factors are important in themselves, however, it is the sum total effect which is most important. If one aspect is lacking, the story as a unit will also be lacking. Excellence in some of the areas cannot cover up or make up for other areas of poorer quality. It should be noted, however, that as the child grows older, the subdivisions classified as areas dealing with format will change. Books for younger children would require more

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[29]Ibid., p. 10.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., p. 11.

[32]Ibid., p. 15.

pictures, less text, and a generally different approach. That is not to say that format is not important to books designed for the older child, but rather that the presentation should be directed to the expected audience.

Each of the above mentioned factors will be used to examine the appropriateness of the Star Trek Books.

Chapter 3

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research project is to determine whether the Star Trek stories are appropriate reading material for elementary school children.

Star Trek is the creation of Mr. Gene Roddenberry and was produced as a television series. It was first aired in 1966 and remained on the air until 1969. Mr. Roddenberry originated the characters, setting, theme, and some of the plots of the television series. Many other authors also wrote stories for the series.

In 1966 Mr. James Blish began transcribing the original television scripts into short story form. The first collection of these stories was copyrighted in January 1967 and included seven of the stories from the first season. All seventy-nine stories from the television series were eventually transcribed and published in twelve separate volumes.

PROCEDURES

As previously stated, the problems of censorship are wide and varied and are not to be readily solved. Aspects which may be considered objectionable are becoming

more visual in children's literature. There are no generally accepted guidelines in the area of censorship for children's literature. Rather, censorship is approached with many differing attitudes resulting in great inconsistencies. Because of this lack of agreement no attempt will be made in this study to determine the objectionable elements which may be present in the Star Trek series.

To determine the appropriateness of the series in the seven areas mentioned under the topic of selection publications dealing with the analysis of the Star Trek series will be examined and reported upon.

To find the readability levels of the Star Trek books the Fry Readability Scale will be used.

READABILITY

As stated in chapter two, there are many methods for determining readability levels. Unfortunately, most of these are very time consuming and difficult to apply. For this reason the Fry Readability Graph, which has been transposed into the Fry Readability Scale, was used for this study.

Although simplicity is a noteworthy consideration, accuracy is of prime importance.

Accuracy, or validity, is, however, difficult to determine.

> . . . There are no rigorous standards of just what is 4th grade difficulty as opposed to 5th grade difficulty. There seems to be some loose sort of agreement between publishers and educators which is

based on experience and perhaps a little on test data as to what grade level designations mean.[33]

Because of this, when determining validity, results of different readability formulas are compared and a correlation among them is found.

One study was done which compared the Fry, SRA, Botel, Dale-Chall and Flesch formulas. Ten books were examined using each of the formulas. The findings are noted in the following table.

Readability Method	Fry	SRA	Botel	Dale-Chall	Flesch	Student Comp.
Fry	---	.98	.78	.94	.96	.93
SRA	.98	---	.81	.95	.98	.90
Botel	.78	.81	---	.82	.73	.64
Dale-Chall	.94	.95	.82	---	.95	.90
Flesch	.96	.98	.73	.95	---	.94
Student Comp.	.93	.90	.64	.90	.94	---

[34]

According to Fry:

The Dale-Chall formula correlated quite highly with the Readability Graph (.94). The high correlation with the Flesch formula (.96) was expected as the

---

[33]Edward Fry, "A Readability Formula That Saves Time," Journal of Reading, April 1968, p. 515.

[34]Ibid., p. 575.

> inputs are basically the same, only instead of mathematical computation, the Graph has plotting to yield levels. The SRA formula also has the same inputs of syllables and sentence length, but uses a plastic wheel for an analogue (slide rule type) device to compute level (correlation .98) that yields four gross levels only. The Graph yields 13 grade levels. My only explanation as to why the Botel formula did not correlate better (.78) with anything else is that it takes into account only vocabulary difficulty and completely ignores structure complexity...[35]

Another study was done which compared Fry with Spache, the Cloze Technique, and Oral Reading. In this study seven books were analyzed. The following chart indicates the findings.

	Fry	Spache	Cloze	Oral Reading
Fry	---	.90	.95	.90
Spache	.90	---	.96	.86
Cloze	.95	.96	---	.86
Oral Reading	.90	.86	.86	---

[36]

> The rank order correlations...show a high degree of consistency between the Graph and the other methods. It is interesting that both the Spache Formula and the Readability Graph correlate about as well with the Cloze passages.[37]

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[35]Ibid., p. 576.

[36]Edward Fry, "The Readability Graph Validated at Primary Levels," The Reading Teacher, March, 1969, p. 538.

[37]Ibid.

In summation the correlation between Fry and the other formulas tested are: SRA .98, Fleck .96, Cloze .95, Dale-Chall .94, Spache .90, Oral Reading .90, and Botel .78. With the exception of the Botel Formula the correlations found are significantly high enough to justify the use of the Fry Readability Graph.

The complete directions for the use of the Fry Readability Scale are given in the appendix. As per directions, three randomly selected passages from each book were chosen. These passages were taken from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the books. The samples included both narrative and dialogue. The findings ascertained by the application of the above procedures will be given in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The findings have been divided into two sections. The first section examines each of the factors determined important to selection of materials for children, namely; plot, setting, theme, characterization, style, and format.

The second section deals with the readability levels determined by the application of the Fry Readability Scale.

The twelve interrelated books under investigation can be considered as a series, since they share the same setting, characters, and theme. Because of this, in discussing appropriateness for children, in terms of the factors mentioned in the section on selection, neither each book nor each story will be analyzed individually. Rather, the sum total effects evident throughout the series will be discussed.

SELECTION

SETTINGS

The setting of the Star Trek stories is probably the most elaborate, specific and unique of any setting ever devised for any fictional presentation. Gene Roddenberry,

who is responsible for Star Trek, in effect created a whole universe.

> Gene created a totally new universe. He invented a starship which. . . is a logical progression from what we know today. He created customs, morals, modes of speaking, a complete technology. . . He created an entire galaxy, with very specific laws governing behavior, manners, customs, as well as science and technology.[38]

All of the Star Trek stories are set in the twenty-third century. A majority of the events occur aboard a starship, the U.S.S. Enterprise.

> It [the Enterprise] is 947 feet long, 417 feet wide overall, and has a maximum gross weight of 19,000 tons. . . It is divided into three main sections: the saucer-shaped primary hull, the cigar-shaped secondary (engineering) hull, and the twin engine pods.[39]

Throughout the stories different aspects of the ship are described. The most commonly mentioned areas are: the bridge, the sick bay, the transporter rooms, the engine room, the recreation rooms, and the briefing rooms.

Although most of the events occur aboard the Enterprise, other areas described are: Class M planets (those planets with earthlike properties), other spaceships, star bases, and outer space.

As important as aspects of time and place in the area of setting are the environmental factors, the things used and seen everyday.

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[38]Stephen E. Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry, The Making of Star Trek (New York: Ballantine, 1968), p. 74.

[39]Ibid., p. 171.

> With Star Trek, everything. . . had to be designed from scratch. Equipment, tools, clothing, weapons, furniture, even knives and forks - almost everything will be different two or three centuries from now.[40]

Mr. Roddenberry thoroughly thought out each little detail in order to make the entirety of Star Trek believable.

CHARACTERIZATION

There are three main and five minor characters prevalent throughout the series. In each individual story usually one or two other main characters are presented; however, these individuals are generally unique to that particular story.

The main characters are: Captain James T. Kirk, Commander Spock, and Doctor Leonard McCoy.

Captain Kirk is about thirty-four years old and was born in a small town in the State of Iowa. He entered the Space Academy at seventeen and finished in the top five percent of his class. He commanded the Enterprise for more than four years.[41]

> Although Kirk has never been married, he does have relatives back on Earth. His father is dead, but his mother is still living, as is a nephew. Kirk's only brother, Sam, and Sam's wife were killed in a planetary disaster.
>
> James T. Kirk is an idealist, rather sensitive, with a strong, complex personality. Constantly on trial within himself, he feels acutely the responsibility of his position and is therefore fully capable

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[40] Ibid., p. 75.

[41] Ibid., pp. 215-16.

> of letting the worry and the frustration lead him into error. Ignoring the fact that he is also capable of fatigue, Kirk is often inclined to push himself beyond human limits. When he must give into fatigue, he then condemns himself because he is not superhuman.[42]

> Kirk. . . is unafraid of his emotions, yet very definitely masculine. He is aggressive without being brutal. He is compassionate without being weak. He is decisive without being officious. He is efficient without being rigid. He is a man who has come to terms with and mastered the supermachines of his age - without losing any of his precious human characteristics.[43]

Much has been written about the character Mr. Spock. This is probably related to his uniqueness. He is biologically a hybrid; half "Vulcan" and half human.

> He [Spock] has inherited characteristics from both parents, but his Vulcan side is definitely the stronger, and he thinks of himself as a Vulcan.
>
> The alien influence is most obviously represented by his stoic temperament, upswept eyebrows, mildly slanted eyes, yellowish complexion, and somewhat enlarged, pointed ears. . . All of Spock's sensory organs are slightly better-developed than those of Terrans (Earthlings). He can withstand higher temperatures, go for longer periods of time without water, and can tolerate a higher level of pain. He can also exercise complete voluntary control over his consciousness and over pain.[44]
>
> His heart is located in the lower right area of his chest, approximately where the human liver would be. He has green blood, (because of traces of copper and nickel). . . and a pulse rate of 242 beats per minute.[45]

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[42] Ibid., p. 216.

[43] Jacqueline Lichtenberg, Sondra Marshak and Joan Winston, Star Trek Lives (New York: Bantam, 1975), p. 39.

[44] Whitfield and Roddenberry, op. cit., p. 224.

[45] Ibid., p. 229.

> He is vulnerable to his human emotions. He is lonely and vulnerable to the friendship of Kirk and the needling of McCoy. His patchwork human/Vulcan metabolism can be as much a liability as an asset. His telepathic ability is flawed with a somewhat erratic control.[46]

> Thus, while Spock is classified as a Vulcan, he is in reality neither Vulcan nor Terran. He is biologically, emotionally, and even intellectually a half-breed.[47]

The third main character of the Star Trek stories is Doctor McCoy.

> Dr. "Bones" McCoy is Senior Ship's Surgeon of the U.S.S. Enterprise and head of the Medical Department. As such, he is medically responsible for the physical and emotional health of the crew of the Enterprise. He also has broad medical science responsibilities in areas of space exploration. . . . Dr. McCoy is 45 years old, was born in Georgia in the United States, and never wanted to be anything but a doctor. A student of the "old school," he received his medical training as a general practitioner.
>
> He was married once. . . . The marriage ended unhappily in a divorce. However, he has a twenty-one year old daughter named Joanna. . . . McCoy has an inbred distrust of machines, as evidenced by his loathing for the transporter system used for "beaming" personnel from the ship to planet surfaces. . . . McCoy is. . . a very outspoken character, with more than a little cynical bite in his attitudes and observations on life. He has an acid wit. . . . Like most cynics, Dr. McCoy is at heart a bleeding humanist. . . . He is filled with idiosyncrasies, which have become his trademark, and is regarded by the other crew members as something of an eccentric.[48]

His professional attitude is that of an old-fashioned general practitioner who believes that a

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[46]Lichtenberg, Marshak and Winston, op. cit., p. 50.

[47]Whitfield and Roddenberry, op. cit., p. 227.

[48]Ibid., pp. 239-40.

> little suffering is good for the soul, and he dislikes the idea of technology depriving man of his individuality. He is the least militaristic and most idiosyncratic person aboard the Enterprise.[49]

The five minor characters of the Star Trek stories are: Lieutenant Commander Montgomery Scott, Lieutenant Uhura, Helmsman Sulu, Ensign Pavel Chekov, and Nurse Christine Chapel.

"Scotty" is the Enterprise's Engineering Officer and is third-in-command.

> He is an engineer by nature as much as by trade. . . . Engineering is an emotion to Scotty; beauty is a perfect engine, perfectly maintained, perfectly operating.
>
> [He] considers the Engineering Department his own private domain and is likely to view anyone entering his department (even the Captain) as an intruder. He considers the U.S.S. Enterprise to be owned by himself, subconsciously thinks of the Captain as simply the "driver". . . . Scotty is intensely loyal to Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock. . . . He has no desire to command a space vessel. He is much happier as Engineering Officer, which he considers as assignment really more important and certainly more enjoyable than that of Captain. . . . His mother and father are still living, he has no brothers or sisters. Although he enjoys children, he has never been married.[50]

The Helmsman is known as Sulu and is of mixed Oriental and Filipino descent.

> Sulu is a career officer, a most efficient Helmsman, and is also considered highly proficient in his secondary duty of Enterprise Weapons Officer. . . . Sulu's cultural heritage is mainly Japanese, and he

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[49] Bjo Trimble, Star Trek Concordance (New York: Ballantine, 1976), p. 191.

[50] Whitfield and Roddenberry, op. cit., pp. 224-25.

> finds himself drawn to the samurai concept as a philosophy. Despite this, he is a rather "hip" character and has an excellent sense of humor. . . . He changes hobbies about once a week, and whatever he is currently involved in, he lets you know all about it. Biology, fencing, and physical exercise have all been kicks of his at one time or another, and interest in space biology has been somewhat consistent.[51]

Ensign Chekov is of Russian descent, born near Moscow and is twenty-two years old.

> He is a nice, normal young man, with the normal strong twenty-two-year-old urge for young ladies. Still, he is nowhere near ready to settle down yet. He probably will make a career of the Space Service, is a dedicated young officer who is believed by Captain Kirk to have the potential of being a future starship captain.[52]

The Communications Officer aboard the Enterprise is Lieutenant Uhura.

> Communications Officer Uhura is an African, a citizen of the Bantu Nation of United Africa of the 23rd century. . . . She is a desirable and attractive young lady, and a highly able starship officer, considered by Captain Kirk fully as capable and reliable as any lieutenant aboard.
>
> Uhura is torn between the idea of someday becoming a wife and mother, and a desire to remain in the service as a career officer. Her life at present is a battle between her female need for the pleasant routine of Earthbound home and family versus the personal challenge of starship life and continued new worlds to conquer.[53]

Christine Chapel is the Enterprise's Chief Nurse although she holds a Doctorate Degree in Bio-Research.

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[51] Ibid., p. 247.

[52] Ibid., pp. 250-51.

[53] Ibid., pp. 250-51.

> Nurse Christine Chapel is Dr. McCoy's chief medical assistant. She was engaged at one time, but her fiance, a well-known scientist, was lost on an expedition. She entered the Service, hoping against hope that possibly in her travels as a nurse with the Starship she would find some indication that he was still alive. . . . Christine is desperately in love with Mr. Spock, but it is an unrewarding relationship. . . . It can never work out. . . . She is certainly an efficient nurse. The loss of her fiance has broken all emotional ties with Earth. Now she is totally dedicated to the Service.[54]

According to Whitfield and Roddenberry:

> In order to create a believable character for a story, you must give him a background, a personality, interests, mannerisms, and all the other things you notice in a real flesh-and-blood person. The more believable and multidimensional, the better. The same thing is true of the setting, or environment, in which the characters live and operate.[55]

THEME

As stated, the theme of a book (or series) is the author's purpose for the writing. "Theme provides a dimension of the story beyond the action of the plot."[56] The theme of Star Trek is the purpose as devised by Gene Roddenberry, the original creator. Mr. Roddenberry stated:

> . . . Star Trek, for me, was, among other things, a vehicle by which I could express certain philosophical beliefs I have. . . . I think when we get very wise, the most prized thing in the universe we'll have learned is the fact there's diversity. I think the fact that

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[54]Ibid., p. 254.

[55]Ibid., p. 43.

[56]Charlotte S. Huck and Doris Young Kuhn, Children's Literature in the Elementary School (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 11.

you are different from me is a delightful thing. I think that man should stop seeking uniformity. Unfortunately, people today feel threatened if someone believes differently than they do. I think when we're wise, we're going to be delighted by the fact that other people do, and ask why. And why is a delightful question.

Star Trek was trying to say some other things. That to be different is not to be ugly. To be different is not necessarily to be wrong. That for different people, different lifeforms under different situations, there may not be just one truth.[57]

Mr. Roddenberry also noted that:

I think Star Trek was a first. . . having a mixed cultures and philosophies. It just seemed to me most implicitly obvious that if mankind makes it into the next century, all of those things that have divided us - color, race, religion, culture, and so on - can no longer divide us. Petty nationalism has got to go. We will not make it unless we have begun to cherish the differences between people, instead of being afraid of them. I think variety gives life a lovely quality: Irishmen and Jews and blacks and Asians, all bring a fascinating kaleidoscope of wonderful things. It just seemed obvious to me, that that's what we at Star Trek had to do.[58]

PLOT

Seventy-nine stories in the series yield seventy-nine unique plots. This number could easily be doubled if the myriad of subplots interposed throughout the series are included. It is impractical to enumerate the plots of each story. Rather, to understand the theme, setting, and

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[57]Lichtenberg, Marshak, Winston, op. cit., p. 133.

[58]Susan Sacket, Letters to Star Trek (New York: Ballentine, 1977), p. 34.

characters is sufficient to suggest the direction of the plots. The keynote about which each plot is centered lies in the mission of the Enterprise, "To explore strange new worlds, to seek out new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before."[59]

> Assigned to operate in a far-off sector of the galaxy, the ship's duties include: scientific investigation and reconnaissance of previously unexplored worlds, providing aid and supplies for Earth colonies, diplomatic courtesy calls on alien planets, and the enforcement of laws regulating commerce between Federation members.[60]

STYLE

All of the stories are written with both narrative and dialogue with emphasis on the latter. Sentence length ranges from one word to over forty words. The third person is used exclusively. There is little usage of allegory, sarcasm, or metaphor. The vocabulary is rather simple except when reference is made to specific Star Trek jargon.

FORMAT

In terms of format the Star Trek books are rather unimaginative. They are all "pocket paperbacks" of the standard 7 inches X 4 inches size. No illustrations accompany the text. They are printed on low glare, newsprint type

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[59] Whitfield and Roddenberry, op. cit., p. 202.

[60] Ibid., p. 203.

paper with standard size print. Each book includes six to seven stories and in most of the books, a contents page is found. The page length runs from 118 to 188 pages.

READABILITY LEVELS

The results of the application of the Fry Readability Scale are given in Table 1. The levels found ranged from fifth grade to eighth grade with an average placement of sixth grade.

Table 1

Book	Page	Sentence Length	Number of Syllables	Average of Sentence Lengths	Average Number of Syllables	Read-ability Level
1	1	2.25	141	9.05	137	6
1	48	14.70	143			
1	128	10.2	128			
2	1	3.8	175	6.7	147	8
2	39	9.6	124			
2	89	6.8	143			
3	1	5.3	143	9.6	140	6
3	53	12.3	141			
3	117	11.3	136			
4	1	5.1	153	8.6	139	6
4	45	8.1	136			
4	121	12.5	128			
5	1	7.1	151	8.6	147	7
5	61	6.5	121			
5	119	10.7	170			
6	1	5.4	164	10.1	150	7
6	55	10.3	151			
6	101	14.8	136			
7	1	7.4	136	8.4	137	6
7	53	7.8	146			
7	131	9.9	129			

Table 1 (Continued)

Book	Page	Sentence Length	Number of Syllables	Average of Sentence Lengths	Average Number of Syllables	Readability Level
8	1	12.2	167	11.8	147	6
8	51	13.2	126			
8	144	10.0	148			
9	1	14.1	147	11.4	147	6
9	65	11.0	141			
9	111	9.2	137			
10	1	11.0	139	10.9	143	6
10	47	14.6	144			
10	104	7.2	147			
11	1	7.6	143	10.9	141	5
11	75	12.3	142			
11	112	12.7	138			
12	[illegible]	6.9	156	9.8	147	7
12	89	12.7	145			
12	153	10.1	140			

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The specific problems dealt with in this study are: determining the readability levels of the Star Trek stories, and the ability of these stories to meet certain selection qualifications, as indicated in the field of children's literature.

The conclusions, summary, and recommendations were determined by analysis of the findings given in the previous chapter. They are as follows:

CONCLUSIONS

1. In terms of setting and characterization Star Trek exhibits a superior presentation.

2. In terms of theme Star Trek gives children a positive philosophy towards acceptance of others.

3. The plots found in the series are well constructed and deal with a wide and imaginative variety.

4. The style, which consists of narration and dialogue, exhibits a naturalness which can be easily understood by children.

5. The format appeals to elementary children. The books are "pocket paperback" yet contain several short

stories appropriate to the shorter attention span of the child.

6. The readability levels found range from fifth to eighth grade with an average placement of sixth grade.

SUMMARY

The Star Trek stories adapted by James Blish and taken from the television series created by Gene Roddenberry should be considered as recreational reading material for certain children in the elementary school. The children who would benefit from these books would be those children who have an interest in science fiction and who are reading somewhere near a sixth to eighth grade reading level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There are two series of Star Trek books presently in print. The one used for this study was taken from the original television series of 1966-1969. The other series was taken from the animated television series which was aired in 1973-1974. This second series of books are identified by the titles, Log 1 through Log 12. Further study could be made of this second series.

2. Many other Star Trek stories based upon the television series but not taken from the aired programs, are also in print. These stories could also be evaluated.

3. A comparison of the three sets of Star Trek books could be done to determine which would be more acceptable to the elementary school child.

4. The Star Trek stories involve only a miniscule section of science fiction. Many other science fiction stories have been written. These other publications need to be evaluated. Comparisons could then be made to determine how the Star Trek books rate with other books in the same field.

5. The problems of censorship are ever present when discussing literature for children. This study did not attempt to cover this area; however, it is an area in which objective research needs to be done.

6. There are over thirty methods for determining readability levels. Although much research has been done in this area there is still more that needs to be done.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DIRECTIONS FOR THE FRY READABILITY SCALE

Directions: Randomly select three 100 word passages from a book or article. Count the number of syllables and determine the number of sentences for each 100 words and average the findings. Choose more passages if great variability is observed and conclude that the book has uneven readability. Position the movable block under your syllable count on the horizontal scale above. Locate the closest sentence count in the column beside the vertical cutout window, left. (Turn scale over, if necessary.) The approximate grade level is now revealed in the window opposite your sentence count. If syllable count falls between even numbers, take closest or next highest.

Additional Directions:

1. Randomly select three sample passages and count out exactly 100 words beginning with the beginning of a sentence. Do not count numerals. Do count proper nouns.

2. Count the number of sentences in each 100 words, estimating length of the fraction of the last sentence to the nearest 1/10th.

3. Count the total number of syllables in each 100-word passage. If a hand counter is not available, an easy way is to put a mark above every syllable beyond one in each word; then when you get to the end of the passage,

count the number of marks and add 100. Average the findings from the three samples.

4. Move the block on the horizontal scale above until it is positioned under the average number of syllables. In the column of numbers on the left, find the approximate number of sentences. The approximate reading grade level of the passage appears in the window opposite the sentence count.

5. If a great deal of variability is found, putting more sample counts into the average is recommended.

APPENDIX B

ORIGINAL AUTHORS OF THE STAR TREK STORIES

Adams, Stanley
Armen, Margaret
Aroeste, Jean Lisette
Bar-David, S.
Bixby, Jerome
Black, John D. F.
Bloch, Robert
Burnes, Judy
Butler, Nathan
Carabatsos, Steven W.
Coon, Gene L.
Crawford, Oliver
Cronin, Lee
Dolinsky, Neyer
Dugan, John T.
Ehrlich, Max
Ellison, Harlan
Erwin, Lee
Fontana, D. C.
Gerrold, David
Hammer, Robert
Harmon, David P.
Hinemann, Arthur H.
Ingalls, Don
Johnson, George Clayton
Lakso, Edwar J.
Lewis, Shari
Lucas, John Meredyth
Mankiewicz, Don M.
Matheson, Richard
Muskat, Joyce
Peeples, Samuel
Ralston, Gilbert A.
Richards, Chet
Richards, Michael
Roddenberry, Gene
Sabaroff, Robert
Schneider, Paul
Singer, Arthur H.
Slavin, George F.
Sobelman, Boris
Sohl, Jerry
Spies, Adrian
Spinrad, Norman
Sturgeon, Theodore
Tarcher, Jeremy
Trivers, Barry
Vollarets, Rik
Wallace, Art
Wilber, Carey
Wincelberg, Simon
Wolfe, Laurence N.

APPENDIX C

TITLES OF THE STAR TREK STORIES

Star Trek 1

Charlie's Law
Dagger of the Mind
The Unreal McCoy
Balance of Terror
The Naked Time
Miri
The Conscience of the King

Star Trek 2

Arena
A Taste of Armageddon
Tomorrow is Yesterday
Errand of Mercy
Court Martial
Operation - Annihilate:
The City of the Edge of Forever
Space Seed

Star Trek 3

The Trouble with Tribbles
The Last Gunfight
The Doomsday Machine
Assignment: Earth
Mirror, Mirror
Friday's Child
Amok Time

Star Trek 4

All Our Yesterdays
The Devel in the Dark
Journey to Babel
The Menagerie
The Enterprise Incident
A Piece of the Action

Star Trek 5

Whom Gods Destroy
The Tholian Web
Let That be Your Last Battlefield
This Side of Paradise
Turnabout Intruder
Requiem for Methuselah
The Way to Eden

Star Trek 6

The Salvage Curtain
The Lights of Zetar
The Apple
By Any Other Name
The Cloud Minders
The Mark of Gideon

Star Trek 7

Who Mourns for Adonais
The Changeling
The Paradise Syndrome
Metamorphosis
The Deadly Years
Elaan of Troyius

Star Trek 8

Spock's Brain
The Enemy Within
Catspaw
Where No Man Has Gone Before
Wolf in the Fold
For the World is Hollow and I Have Touched the Sky

Star Trek 9

Return to Tomorrow
The Ultimate Computer
That Which Survives
Obsession
The Return of the Archons
The Immunity Syndrome

Star Trek 10

The Alternative Factor
The Empath
The Galileo Seven
Is There in Truth No Beauty?
A Private Little War
The Omega Glory

Star Trek 11

What Are Little Girls Made of?
The Squire of Gothos
Wink of an Eye
Bread and Circuses
Day of the Dove
Plato's Stepchildren

Star Trek 12

Patterns of Force
The Gamesters of Triskelion
The Corbomite Maneuver
Shore Leave
And the Children Shall Be Dead